

ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey

Publicity Committee

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 28, 1998

TO: ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey Board Members

FROM: Yessenia Correa, Publicity Chair

SUBJ: Publicity activities to date

We have had some exciting press coverage (including a piece in *The Star Ledger*) over the last several weeks, mostly regarding the opening ceremony of the Jersey City Center on Tuesday, March 24, 1998 at 1:00 p.m. Specifically, ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey has appeared in:

<u>Publication</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Page</u>
<i>El Especialito</i>	4/10/98	32
<i>Councilwoman Melissa Holloway's</i> Newsletter, Vol. 4 No. 2	Winter 1997/98	—
<i>Jersey City Reporter</i>	April 5, 1998	3
<i>Jersey Journal</i>	March 25, 1998	—

I have enclosed copies of the Media Alert (dated March 20th) and the Press Release about the grand-opening celebration.

On Another Note...

On Saturday, May 23, 1998 at 6:00 p.m., I will be sworn-in as the Vice President of a new Latin American women's organization called *Confraternidad de Damas Latinoamericanas de New Jersey*. The event will take place in the Council Chambers of City Hall, located at 280 Grove Street in Jersey City. You are all cordially invited to attend. Please let me know if you are planning on coming so that I can give the President an estimated head count. You can reach me by calling 547-4622 (w) or 420-0180 (h).

CITY OF
JERSEY CITY



BRET SCHUNDLER
MAYOR

CITY HALL
JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302
(201) 547-5200

Office of the Mayor
March 23, 1998

Contact: Yessenia Correa
201/547-4622

Schundler To Host Grand-Opening Celebration of National Education Agency's Jersey City Center

**ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey's Local Center
To Serve 300 Children, Parents**

When: Tuesday, March 24, 1998
1:00 p.m.

Where: 353 2nd Street (corner of 2nd & Monmouth)
Jersey City, NJ

Jersey City – Mayor Bret Schundler, local elected officials, as well as staff and Board Members of ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey will join together on Tuesday, March 24, 1998 at 1:00 p.m. for a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 353 2nd Street in Jersey City. The event will celebrate the opening of the Jersey City Center of ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey.

"Over the years, many students from Ferris High School and P.S. #5 have benefitted from the educational efforts of ASPIRA. Thanks, in part, to its new office in Jersey City, ASPIRA can offer its services to even more students. I commend ASPIRA for its dedication, and wish them much continued success," Schundler said.

The Jersey City Center of ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey will serve parents and youth from Ferris High School as well as ten public elementary schools. One of the programs to be provided at the Jersey City Center is ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence (APEX). APEX trains parents to work collectively as advocates for improved schools. More specifically, APEX trains parents in leadership development and education reform, thus allowing them the opportunity to become turn-key trainers of other parents.

(MORE)

ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey's Executive Director William Colon says that the new Center will greatly assist local efforts to serve Puerto Rican/Latino youth.

"ASPIRA is committed to serving the educational needs of the Puerto Rican/Latino youth in Jersey City. I am confident that the Jersey City Center will greatly facilitate our efforts to help make this already vibrant community an even more successful one," said Colon.

ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey provides youth with guidance and career counseling, college placement, and help in obtaining financial assistance for a college education. Student participants, referred to as ASPIRANTES, receive leadership training with an emphasis on positive self-image, goal setting, and cultural pride.

Nationwide, the ASPIRA organization has been serving the community for over 35 years. Since its formation in 1961, ASPIRA has grown into a national organization with offices in six states and Puerto Rico, as well as a national office for policy and advocacy in Washington, D.C. As published in the December, 1997 issue of *Money* magazine, ASPIRA is ranked as the second most effective charity in the United States.

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CITY OF
JERSEY CITY



BRET SCHUNDLER
MAYOR

CITY HALL
JERSEY CITY, NJ 07302
(201) 547-5200

Office of the Mayor
March 20, 1998

Contact: Yessenia Correa
201/547-4622

Media Alert

Schundler To Host Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony For Jersey City Center of ASPIRA Inc. of New Jersey

WHO: Mayor Bret Schundler, local officials, & staff members of ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey's Jersey City Center.

ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey bases its operations in Newark, NJ. Under the leadership of Executive Director William Colon and its Board of Directors, the agency promotes leadership through education. Since being founded in 1968, it has offered guidance and career counseling, college placement, and help in obtaining financial assistance for college education. Student participants, referred to as ASPIRANTES, receive leadership training with an emphasis on positive self-image, goal setting, and cultural pride.

According to the December '97 issue of *Money* magazine, ASPIRA, Inc. is ranked as the second most effective charity in the United States.

WHAT: Holding a grand-opening/ribbon-cutting ceremony at the new Jersey City Center of ASPIRA, Inc. of New Jersey. Event to inaugurate a Center that will serve as the hub of the national organization's Puerto Rican/Latino dropout prevention efforts in Jersey City.

The Jersey City Center will serve over 300 students at Ferris High School and Public Schools # 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 25, 27, 28, 37, and 40.

WHERE: 353 2nd Street, Jersey City, near the corner of Monmouth & 2nd Streets

WHEN: Tuesday, March 24, 1998 @ 1:00 p.m.

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Education

The key to knowledge for Hispanic parents

By Towanda Underdue

STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Idalia Arcelay thought she was being a good parent. After all, she sent her children to school each day.

But after they had left for school and she'd cleaned the apartment, she lounged around watching television and was too busy using drugs to attend teacher-parent conferences, she said.

Then came the wake-up jolt. Her 15-year-old son brought home a "D" in math on his report card.

"It hurt me because he had always been on the honor roll," said the 32-year-old mother of three, who dropped out of school in the ninth grade and eventually ended up on welfare. She said the D on her son's report card showed that he too was on the wrong path.

For years, Hispanic students have dropped out of the nation's high schools at an alarming rate, compared with other minority and white students. Aspira, a national nonprofit organization that has counseled Hispanic youths for years, hopes to make a dent in the problem by targeting parents like Arcelay. She now works for the organization's chapter in Newark.

On Tuesday, Aspira will host a grand opening for its Jersey City office on Second Street near Monmouth. The opening of the office follows a week of free Aspira Parents for Educational Excellence workshops designed to get Jersey City parents involved in schools.

The APEX program, which began in Newark three years ago, will expand to include 300 more parents in Jersey City. In Camden and Paterson it will target another 450 or 500 parents in September, New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Florida, Connecticut and Puerto Rico also have programs.

"I think that this is all in the children's best good," said Philip Burch, a political science professor at Rutgers University who has researched dropout rates for years. "Parental involvement is a good thing. Asian-Americans do remarkably well in the American school system. They outperform whites, blacks and Hispanics because of encouragement and pressures from their families."

Arcelay, who lives in Newark, said she cleaned up her act after her chil-

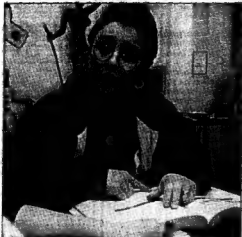


PHOTO BY GENE SCHWARTZ

Idalia Arcelay of Newark turned her life around with the help of Aspira. She now tutors for the group's APEX program.

dren told her about Aspira and the APEX program in Newark. Her son pulled his math grade up to a B, and she gained confidence through the Newark workshops and got a GED (general education diploma) from Essex County College. Now she's preparing for a career as a police officer while lobbying for her children.

Arcelay joined other APEX counselors in the Jersey City workshops that stressed the importance of meeting teachers, attending parent-teacher conferences, disciplining children, setting up specific study times for children and developing a healthy learning environment at home. Parents also learned how to build self-esteem in themselves and their children, and how to lobby effectively through the PTA.

The Hispanic dropout rate has been a problem for more than 20 years, said Delta Porcua, director of the U.S. Education Department's office of bilingual education and minority languages affairs.

Pompa, who helped author the national "No More Excuses" report released last month, said urban His-

panics drop out at an alarming rate because of lack of attention by teachers, poverty and lack of early childhood education.

"There is still some racism in this country and other people don't expect the same performance of Hispanic students that they would expect of another race or ethnicity," she said.

While federal officials have proposed a \$600 million plan to address Hispanic dropout rates, New Jersey's Department of Education says dropout rates here are fairly low. The department's latest data, for July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996, shows 25 percent of the students who dropped out of pre-kindergarten through grades 12 percent are Hispanic. 34.6 percent are white and 37.3 percent are black.

Hana Olum, director of New Jersey's office for bilingual education and equity issues, said New Jersey has a significantly lower Hispanic dropout rate than the nation's because the state has a strong bilingual education law that aids Hispanic students.

But Burch, who has researched

dropout rates for years, doesn't buy the low dropout numbers. "The department and I have a very serious difference of opinion," he said, adding that state officials make the dropout problem look easy by including elementary students, who almost never drop out. He said the state should instead track students for four years, from grades 9 to 12, to get a more accurate picture.

"The dropout problem is most evident in the urban centers," said Burch, adding that both blacks and Hispanics are dropping out at alarming rates. Only 45 percent of Hispanic males, 59 percent of Hispanic females, 32 percent of black males, and 43 percent of black females graduated from Newark's class of 1996, Burch said.

He said the graduation rates also were grim in Jersey City, where 33 percent of Hispanic males, 46 percent of Hispanic females, 43 percent of black males and 48 percent of black females, graduated from the class of 1996.

Aspira, recently named the second best charity by Money Magazine, tries to curb the dropout rate by providing one-on-one counseling to students lost in large school systems. The organization was founded in 1961 by Antonia Pantoja, a former New York City educator. Today, Aspira counsels some 2,000 urban students in Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Camden and Trenton.

Seventeen-year-old Sigifredo Ziggy Mercado of Newark is one of them. He said he never dreamed of going to college until he received counseling from Aspira. Sigifredo, who attends Barringer High School, said his Aspira counselors recently convinced him that he can attend college on financial aid and eventually become an elementary teacher.

"We went on field trips (to Kean College and Montclair State University)," said Sigifredo, who often rushes to the Aspira center on Broad Street after completing classes at Barringer. "I liked it a lot and I decided I wanted to go to one."

For more information contact: Aspira Inc. of New Jersey (973) 484-7354.

INAUGURAN EN JERSEY CITY NUEVA CASA DE ASPIRA

El Alcalde Bret Schundler, oficiales electos locales, así como el personal de la Junta de Miembros de Aspira, Inc., de New Jersey, se unieron el martes 24 de marzo de 1998 a la 1:00 p.m. para la ceremonia de cortar la cinta en el 353 de la Calle 2 en Jersey City. El evento celebró la apertura del Centro de Jersey City de ASPIRA, Inc., de New Jersey.

"Durante todos estos años, muchos estudiantes del Ferris High School y de la P.S. #5, se han beneficiado de los esfuerzos educativos de ASPIRA. Gracias, en parte, a su nueva oficina en Jersey City, Aspira puede ofrecer sus servicios a incluso más estudiantes. Yo alabo a Aspira por su dedicación y deseo que continúen con sus éxitos", dijo Schundler.

El Centro de Jersey City de Aspira, Inc., de New Jersey servirá a los padres y a los jóvenes del Ferris High School así como también a diez escuelas públicas primarias. Uno de los programas a ser provisto en el Centro de Jersey City es Padres de Aspira para la Excelencia Educativa (APEX por sus siglas en inglés). APEX entrena a los padres en el desarrollo de liderazgo y reforma educativa, permitiéndoles así la oportunidad de convertirse en entrenadores de otros padres.

El Director Ejecutivo de Aspira, Inc., de New Jersey, William Colón, dice que el nuevo centro ayudará grandemente a los esfuerzos locales para servir a la juventud puertorriqueña/latina.

"El compromiso de Aspira es servir a las necesidades educativas de la juventud puertorriqueña/latina en Jersey City. Yo

SCHUNDLER FUE EL ANFITRION DE LA CELEBRACION DE LA GRAN APERTURA DE LA AGENCIA DE EDUCACION NACIONAL DEL CENTRO DE JERSEY CITY

tengo confianza de que el Centro de Jersey City facilitará grandemente nuestros esfuerzos para hacer que esta vibrante comunidad sea todavía más exitosa", dijo Colón.

Aspira Inc., de New Jersey provee a la juventud una guía y asesoría en carreras, colocación en colegios y para recibir ayuda financiera para costearse una educación universitaria. Los estudiantes que participan, llamados Aspirantes, reciben entrenamiento en liderazgo con un énfasis en una imagen propia positiva, establecimiento de metas y orgullo en su cultura.

En toda la nación, la organización Aspira ha estado sirviendo a la comunidad por más de 35 años. Desde su formación en 1961, Aspira se ha convertido en una organización nacional con oficinas en seis estados y Puerto Rico, así como también una oficina nacional para política y abogacía en Washington, D.C. Como fue publicado en diciembre de 1997 en la revista Money, Aspira tiene el rango número dos entre las organizaciones caritativas más efectivas de los Estados Unidos.



Corte de la cinta inaugural del nuevo local de ASPIRA en Jersey City. Junto al Alcalde Bret Schundler, vemos a William Colón, Sonia Araujo, el Concejal Mariano Vega y la señora Noemí Velázquez.

ASPIRA opens new office

By Sharon Ottorman

Journal staff writer

Twenty-three years ago, the Hispanic advocacy group ASPIRA closed its Newark Avenue office for lack of funds. The group — which focuses on getting parents involved in schools and students excited about college — has been trying to get back to Jersey City ever since.

The long delay made ASPIRA's official return to Jersey City yesterday even sweeter. In a 1 p.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by Mayor Bret Schundler, ASPIRA officials officially opened their new Second Street office, which will serve as a counseling center for parents and teens.

ASPIRA Inc. has worked in a limited capacity with Ferris High School and Jersey City's School 5 in recent years, teaching leadership skills and helping get students to think about college by sponsoring SAT courses and college visits, said ASPIRA Executive Director William Colman.

With their new office comes a much larger commitment: a \$128,000 program to get parents more involved in 10 Jersey City elementary schools, as well as Ferris.

The parent advocacy program — ASPIRA Parents for Educational Excellence, or APEX — will focus on parents who are not currently involved in their children's schools. Many of those parents are non-English speakers who lack the self-confidence to get involved, said Tiffany Gonzalez, Jersey City coordinator for the center.

The 10 schools that have been selected — Schools 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 25, 27, 28, 37 and 40 — all have substantial Hispanic populations, said Yessenia Correa, spokeswoman for Mayor Schundler and also an ASPIRA board member.

But while ASPIRA historically focuses on the Hispanic community, all parents will be invited to join in the parent workshops. Even parents who aren't from one of those schools

can stop by the Second Street office and sign up, Gonzalez said.

"The role we have right now is to recruit parents who are not involved. We explain to them why it is important to know what is going on in their children's schools," Colon said.

In Newark, where the program has been going on in two schools, more parents are getting involved, Colon added.

The funding for the Jersey City program comes from three sources: \$45,000 from the city of Jersey City, \$28,000 from a state grant and \$44,000 from the Jersey City school board, under the direction of state-appointed Superintendent Richard DiPatri.

ASPIRA will also offer tutoring and college counseling services to any teen-ager in the community who visits its office. There are college guides, financial aid guides and other resources in the office, Gonzalez said.

"We have opened our doors to anyone who wants advice," she said.



BIENVENIDOS —
Celebrating the opening of the new Jersey City Offices of ASPIRA, Inc. Are (from left) Dr. Joseph Ramos, ASPIRA, Inc., Executive Director William Colon; Sonia Araujo; Counselman Mariano Vega, Jr.; Mayor Bret Schundler and ASPIRA Board Chairperson Noemi Velazquez.

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ASPIRA *from page 3*

come to Jersey City.

"I'm confident that the Jersey City center will greatly facilitate our efforts to help make this already-vibrant community an even more successful one," said Colon.

To further that aim, the new office on Second and Monmouth streets Downtown will not just offer assistance to students, but parents as well.

In addition to programs at Ferris and 10 other city elementary schools, The Jersey City ASPIRA Center will offer ASPIRA Parents for Excellence, or APEx.

The program, run by counselor Christina Jacques, will focus on helping parents become advocates for better schools and train their own children to be better students.

"We want parents to get involved and get more involved in their children's schools if they already are," said Jacques.

In 90-minute workshops, Jacques will offer strategies to parents on the small things — how to keep kids focused on homework instead of television — and on the big things that will always be important in the maintenance of good schools, like how to lobby for high standards, continuous reform and open lines of communication between parents and faculty at schools.

"It's everything from how to keep your daughter from hanging out with her friend 'studying,'" said Jacques, "to helping build a core of turn-key parent trainers who will train other parents in how to fight for educational improvements in the school."

The latest set of parent training seminars is slated for Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays at four schools 6, 11, 25, and Ferris High School.

"We can start parents as soon as they are available," said Jacques. □

Aspiring minds

ASPIRA opens Downtown office

By Jim Kennelly
Reporter staff writer

The offices of ASPIRA Inc., opened last week at 353 Second Street to the delight of the parents, students and teachers who have already participated in the statewide organization founded to launch young Latino people into brighter futures through college, career, and common sense counseling for three decades.

"I've been doing this since 1977 and I've learned a lot and I know the kids have too," said Carl Furevig, a Ferris High School teacher and moderator of the ASPIRA Inc., club run by Ferris students. "It's just a shame more of them don't take advantage of it."

At Ferris, about 20 to 30 students meet twice a week at lunch time with an ASPIRA counselor. Tiffany Gonzalez, who helps them fill out college applications, consider employment choices and think about their futures.

This week the Ferris club, in addition to hurrying to make last minute application deadlines, took part in a health workshop.

"We want the kids thinking about their future, every aspect of their future," said Gonzalez.

Gonzalez and Furevig say that ASPIRA doesn't replace the school's guidance department, but augments it.

"We have a good guidance department here," said Furevig, "but typically the responsibility on seniors is to take an application for college and get it done on their own. With ASPIRA, they can ask the counselor

or their peers to help them develop essay topics or figure out what information their parents or guardians have to provide for financial aid forms."

The organization also helps students find sources of higher education financial aid and provides additional placement programs, including bus trips to tour college campuses.

ASPIRANTES, as the youth who take part in the ASPIRA experience are called, also receive leadership training, cultural heritage lessons to foster cultural pride and positive self image.

"After being in ASPIRA, I was still me, but I was a better me," said former ASPIRANTE and college junior, Mayleny Arias. "I was stronger, and I knew better how to get where I wanted to be in life."

In December 1997, Money Magazine rated the national ASPIRA non-profit organization as the second most effective charity in the U.S.

Not just for the kids

For 35 years, in six states and Puerto Rico, ASPIRA has focused on strengthening Puerto Rican and Latino communities in the U.S. The organization's Executive Director, William Colon, said he was pleased that a full-time ASPIRA center had finally

From the desk of . . .

COUNCILWOMAN MELISSA HOLLOWAY

Ward F Jersey City, NJ



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ASPIRA TO OPERATE MAS

A \$20,000 grant has been approved by the National ASPIRA office to support the creation of MAS (Math and Science) academies in New Jersey. The funds were granted to the national office by the Carnegie Foundation. MAS in Spanish means "more". It provides a mentoring and tutorial program in math, science and technology for middle school (6th, 7th and 8th grade) students. The New Jersey program will focus on assisting Latino female students. During the school year, selected students are tutored in math and science by senior level college undergraduate students. They will visit science and technology sites, such as the Liberty Science Center, the New York Hall of Science and the Panasonic Lab, as well as actual research and lab facilities in the corporate world. A parental involvement module will prepare parents to assist their children with their homework in these fields. Additionally, the year round tutorial support will culminate in a four week summer program conducted at college facilities. ASPIRA staff are already negotiating with the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), Rutgers University and Jersey City State College to be the summer host for the academy. School districts may "buy in" to participate in the academy at a cost of \$1750 per students which is not covered by grants and districts are encouraged to provide services to a cluster of 20 students at a time. For further information regarding the MAS Academy, please contact Mr. William Colon, Executive Director at (973) 484-7554.

APEX PROGRAM

The Jersey City Public School district has granted \$44,000 to ASPIRA to provide parent counselors at 11 schools in Jersey City. The counselors will recruit and train approximately 300 parents during the Spring of 1998. This project will run through to June 15th. The APEX (parents for educational excellence) Program was originally funded by a grant from the Readers' Digest Foundation through ASPIRA's national office. The original grant still supports the program in Newark. Jersey City's parents will attend workshops in the following areas: self-esteem; the importance of education; the home connection; school structure in New Jersey; the meaning of parental involvement; the importance of communication; your involvement in the schools; etc. All workshops are offered in English and in Spanish. Upon completion of the program, parents will be able to apply what they have learned and communicate to their children more effectively. For more information, contact the ASPIRA Executive Office, 390 Broad Street, Newark, NJ 07104, (973) 484-7554.

TASK FORCE COMMITTEE REPORT

OBJECTIVE:

To advocate in the local, county and state government in order to promote ASPIRA and secure financial or in kind resources.

ISSUES:

To create a vehicle to facilitate ASPIRA's ^{advocate} lobbying efforts in the government.

To identify grants and/or funds through contacts and obtaining a supporter in the system to facilitate proposals.

To promote the public image of ASPIRA by establishing an association with public officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In order to address these issues some form of reciprocity by both parties is needed. Although ASPIRA cannot endorse any candidate or public official, we can become political and maintain a nonpartisan status. The term political means to establish a community power base where ASPIRA can mobilize the community via voter registration, voter rights, voter and government political structure education. By using this method of political action we can ease the process of governmental bureaucracy to push our issues.

Add

Legislation Efforts Key